

## **Chairman's Address to CRASA Frequency Spectrum Workshop, at the Birchwood Hotel, Boksburg, 24 March 2011**

The Programme Director, Engineer Charles Sibanda, Chairman of CRASA and SAPRA, representatives of communications regulators in the SADC region,

the Deputy Director General from the Department of Communications, Councillors and Managers from ICASA, the CRASA secretariat,

Regulatory executives from communications operators and licensees, colleagues and friends , all protocol observed.

I am very happy to be a host to all of you, coming from all the corners of this beautiful region of SADC.

I had an earlier commitment in Parliament, and I then requested the Programme Director to re-schedule my welcome address for later on this evening.

I really wanted to be with you in person, and to welcome you as per as programme arrangement.

South Africa – ICASA and the Department of Communications – is happy to have you on our shores, and hope that you will really have a good time up until the first of April when we get to conclude the business of our two associations, CRASA and SAPRA.

The harmonisation of regulations for our region takes place from an informed position, and this workshop on the Frequency Spectrum Management serves that purpose.

I hope we will continue this practice of organising such workshops into the new regulatory association that will follow the merger of the two associations.

One cannot begin to talk about communications infrastructure, its deployment and access without talking about the radio frequency spectrum.

Dale Hatfield, an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado holds that the radio frequency spectrum is unique, "unlike other natural resources such as oil, coal or iron it is not consumed by use.

For example, one can use the resource to broadcast a high-power television signal today, and still have the same amount of spectrum tomorrow.

Said another way, the radio frequency spectrum is an infinitely renewable resource".

The radio spectrum can be shared in its frequency, time and space, and additional users can always be accommodated.

At the same time, there are considerations in terms of cost and complexity that limit the number of users that can be served in a given geographic area at one time.

In that sense, the radio spectrum is a scarce resource.

Hence, despite being infinitely renewable, it often has significant economic value, especially in geographic areas with intense demand for wireless communications.

Frequency spectrum management is an important part of communications policy and regulation.

The allocation of spectrum for particular uses, and the development of specific technical and service rules governing those allocations.

These are crucial determinants of industry structure and performance.

On the one end, the allocation of spectrum can make associated service uneconomical.

On the other, it determines the number of competitors, and therefore, has a major impact on the degree of competition.

Southern Africa as a developing region has numerous challenges in terms of the development of our economies, infrastructure and of our people.

We need communications infrastructure that can overcome time and space constraints.

We need communications infrastructure that can contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities – to combat disease, infant mortality, malnutrition and the HIV/Aids pandemic.

In the same vein, we need infrastructure that can contribute to the elimination of ignorance, and improve to the quality of education for our children.

Infrastructure that can contribute to universal access and service for disadvantaged groups and individuals, poor neighbourhoods and rural areas.

E-health, e-education and e-government should be services that we should achieve in our lifetime.

The radio frequency spectrum can go a long-way in realising the developmental aspirations of the people of Southern Africa.

This can done in our respective nation-states through proper allocation, management and regulation, and through regional harmonisation with our neighbouring countries.

Colleagues and friends, I am not an engineer by profession and I expect this workshop to break down the jargon and enable decision-makers to make decisions.

This workshop should enable policy makers to come up with the most progressive of policies, and regulators with the most progressive of regulations.

This would enable operators to compete, and provide affordable services to the public and to consumers.

Colleagues and friends, I have taken much of your time already, I just want to wish you well in your discussions and deliberations.

I thank you.